J. Lands 8-8 (1926-27) 1930 FFS Tanala FFS

772 The plateau tribes have legends of human women being carried off to the under world. If they steadfastly refused to eat, the people there would take pity on them and send them back, but if they ate they could not return.

775 It is interesting to conjecture whether the under world was ever considered the abode of the dead. No such belief is held by any of the groups with whom I worked, but certain practices seem to suggest it. There is an ancient Tanala belief that the soul is drawn back after death to the place where its afterbirth was buried. On the southeast coast each tribe has a sacred river. Unless the umbilical cord of an individual has been thrown into this river, he is not considered a member of the gens, no matter what his descent, and he is debarred from burial in the common tomb. This, in turn, debars his soul from joining those of the ancestors. The tomb is built beside the sacred river when possible and all important ancestral sacrifices are performed on its banks. In some cases part of the blood of the sacrifice must be thrown into the water. There is also a belief in malevolent human spirits who live in the water and are responsible for sudden drownings. Although there is no proof, it seems highly probable that it was once believed that the dead went to the under world through the rivers, returning by the same route to receive the sacrifices.

• 821 Tanala ideas in regard to the heavenly bodies are vague. The sun *masoandro* ("day's eye") is said to be a ball of fire, but there is no explanation of its motion. At sunset it descends through a hole in the western end of our world and traverses the sky of the under world during our night, rising again through a hole in the east. One account of the Tanala says that they believe that the sun travels back over our sky during the night, but all informants whom I asked considered this ridiculous and it certainly is not the present belief.

The moon, *ombolona*, is a ball of some shining substance, which moves across the heavens of the middle and under worlds on the same track as the sun. None of my informants had ever heard a myth explaining its changes, although its phases were named. The new moon is *volombolona*, first quarter *rimbamberona*, full moon *sorifotsy*, and dark of the moon *matinombona*. There seems to be no name for the last quarter.

The stars are said to be "things fastened to the sky." Apparently only three groupings of stars are recognized: *Efidanitsa*, the Milky Way, *Kiotokely mididango* (lit. "children who fight for a rice mortar"),

the Pleiades, and Tolowelp, three very bright stars in a line, at equal intervals. I could not identify the last and it seems to be applied to more than one grouping. Only one star is named, *Fenjive*, the planet Venus. 821

The sun and moon were considered as deities or powers and were often included with the other *Zonakory* in invocations. All informants insisted that they knew no creation myth and I believe that their ignorance was genuine. I found a similar lack among their neighbors the Betsileo and can only conclude that, if such myths ever existed, they have now been completely forgotten. [776] 775

CONTROL OF HUMAN AFFAIRS

The core of Tanala religion is the belief that human affairs are subject to a dual control, that of Beings and that of Fate. The two are of nearly equal importance and both good and evil may derive from either. The Beings interfere capriciously and can be influenced by prayer and sacrifice. Fate, on the other hand, is impersonal and mechanistic. It cannot be influenced by prayer or sacrifice, but its workings can be forecast and its direction changed by magical means. This basic dualism is reflected in a clear cut distinction between the activities of the priest and those of the *ombiasy* ("medicine-man"). The former deals only with the Beings, especially the ancestral spirits, while the latter specializes in the detection and control of Fate and has little to do with the Beings. 771

The interrelation between the Beings and Fate has never been clearly formulated by the natives. Priests and *ombiasy* whom I interrogated agreed that both derived their powers from the same source, *Zonakory*. It was *Zonakory* or the *Zonakory* (plural) who fixed the destiny of the individual at birth. Whether the ancestral spirits had any hand in shaping it was uncertain, but the majority thought not. In changing destiny *Zonakory* was appealed to, but in a formal fashion, the real efficacy lying in the magical acts accompanying the invocation. Apparently there was a feeling that the ancestral spirits could modify the destiny in minor details, but could not change it as a whole. The whole matter was very hazy in the minds of even the best instructed natives and it was clear that they had not thought about it until I questioned them. 776

Beings are believed to be of three sorts, a Deity or Deities, Non-Human Spirits, and Spirits of the Dead. The Deity or Deities are conceived of as first causes and sources of the power exercised by Beings of the other two categories. They are remote and shadowy